



BetterSafe

WELCOA'S ONLINE BULLETIN FOR YOUR FAMILY'S SAFETY

Terrified Your Children Will Develop a Deadly Nut Allergy?

Study finds Peanut Consumption in Infancy Prevents Peanut Allergy

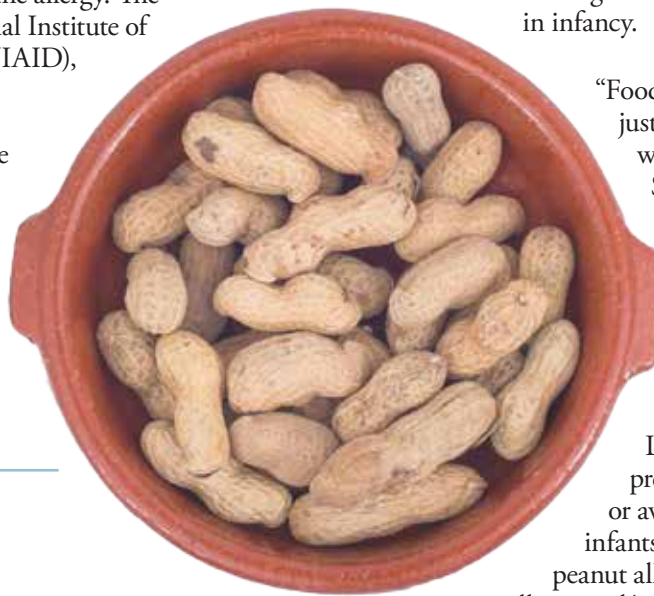
Allergies, especially nut allergies, can be terrifying—and for good reason. Those who are allergic to nuts can have severe and even fatal reactions. Fortunately, there is some good news (especially for parents) around nut allergies.

A recent study has found that the introduction of peanut products into the diets of infants at high risk of developing peanut allergy was safe and led to an 81 percent reduction in the subsequent development of the allergy. The study was supported by the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), part of the National Institutes of Health, and was conducted by the NIAID-funded Immune Tolerance Network (ITN). The results also appear in the online issue of the *New England Journal of Medicine* and were presented at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology.

"The results have the potential to transform how we approach food allergy prevention."

—ANTHONY S. FAUCI, M.D. Director, National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID)

Researchers led by Gideon Lack, M.D., of King's College London, designed a study called Learning Early About Peanut Allergy (LEAP), based on observations that Israeli children have lower rates of peanut allergy compared to Jewish children of similar ancestry residing in the United Kingdom. Unlike children in the UK, Israeli children begin consuming peanut-containing foods early in life. The study tested the hypothesis that the very low rates of peanut allergy in Israeli children were a result of high levels of peanut consumption beginning in infancy.



"Food allergies are a growing concern, not just in the United States but around the world," said NIAID Director Anthony S. Fauci, M.D. "For a study to show a benefit of this magnitude in the prevention of peanut allergy is without precedent. The results have the potential to transform how we approach food allergy prevention."

LEAP compared two strategies to prevent peanut allergy — consumption or avoidance of dietary peanut — in infants who were at high risk of developing peanut allergy because they already had egg allergy and/or severe eczema, an inflammatory skin disorder.

"The study also excluded infants showing early strong signs of having already developed peanut allergy. The safety and effectiveness of early peanut consumption in this group remains unknown and requires further

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study,” said Dr. Lack. “Parents of infants and young children with eczema or egg allergy should consult with an allergist, pediatrician, or their general practitioner prior to feeding them peanut products.”

What the Science is Saying

More than 600 high-risk infants between 4 and 11 months of age were assigned randomly either to avoid peanut entirely or to regularly include at least 6 grams of peanut protein per week in their diets. The avoidance and consumption regimens were continued until 5 years of age. Participants were monitored throughout this period with recurring visits with health care professionals, in addition to completing dietary surveys by telephone.

The researchers assessed peanut allergy at 5 years of age with a supervised, oral food challenge with peanut. They found an overall 81 percent reduction of peanut allergy in children who began early, continuous consumption of peanut compared to those who avoided peanut.

“Prior to 2008, clinical practice guidelines recommended avoidance of potentially allergenic foods in the diets of young children at heightened risk for development of food allergies,” said Daniel Rotrosen, M.D., director of NIAID’s Division of Allergy, Immunology and Transplantation. “While recent studies showed no benefit from allergen avoidance, the LEAP study is the first to show that early introduction of dietary peanut is actually beneficial and identifies an effective approach to manage a serious public health problem.”

